

The Recent Work of David Driskell



Woman with Flowers, 1972

Oil and Collage

Paintings and Prints
August 17 to September 20, 1973

The Boyd Gallery
Bowdoin College Museum of Art



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The Boyd Art Gallery
Bowdoin College Museum of Art
Brunswick, Maine

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FOREWORD

The Bowdoin College Museum of Art is honored to present the work of David Driskell. For several years Professor Driskell has been a member of our artistic community in Maine, maintaining a studio nearby in Falmouth. Last semester Mr. Driskell became part of the Bowdoin faculty as a Visiting Professor.

We are especially pleased to show the pictures Mr. Driskell has produced very recently. Many items were done while in residence at Bowdoin and early this summer. The works recall images which Mr. Driskell studied in Africa and has discussed in his lectures. We feel the exhibition is a fine example of what the combination of creative inspiration and scholarship can produce.

The Museum wishes to acknowledge the splendid assistance and cooperation of Mr. Driskell in preparing the exhibition. He not only has provided the works of art, but also prepared and designed the catalogue. We also wish to recognize the help of Mr. Joseph Kachinski for photographing the works and Mr. Ronald Wallace for mounting the exhibition.

A special word of thanks goes to Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, where Professor Driskell is Chairman of the Department of Art. The University generously made available a matching grant to produce the catalogue. We greatly appreciate their help; it has been a privilege to work with such a fine University.

We also wish to thank Professor Keith Morrison for his Introduction to this catalogue.

R. PETER MOOZ

Director

Bowdoin College Museum of Art

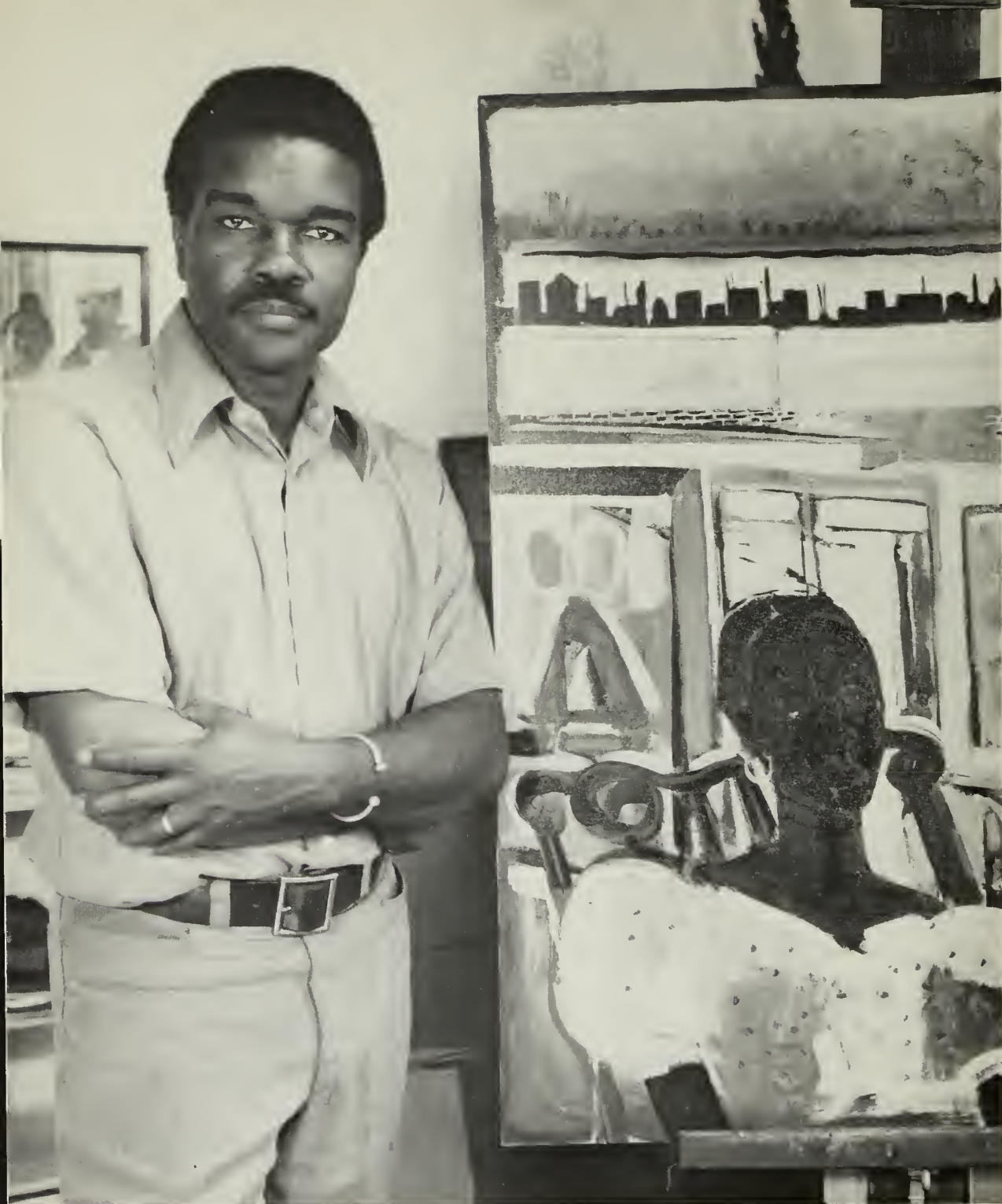
Man, canvas, color and brush become painting. Painting is life. David Driskell is a man who is spending his life painting those qualities which man sees in life and nature. There is the many layered opalescence of his encaustics; the strong brilliantly tense unrelenting surface of his acrylics; the mysteriously haunting ambiguity of paper and paint in his collages and the air of a symphony orchestrated in coloristic nuances in his oils. These are the qualitative elements David has found in life and paint while the quantitative aspects of life and paint have been found in the deep well of his experiences as a man evolving to his ultimate potential. These are the ever recurring themes of the rural landscape of the South and the North; the idiomatic symbolism of the black Baptist church and the Old Testament; the contemporary images of the black ghetto and the interpersonalization of African motifs used as a tribute to his ethnic background.

The forementioned statement depicts for me a man (David Driskell), his life and his painting.

EARL J. HOOKS

Associate Professor of Art

Fisk University, 1973



The artist in his Falmouth, Maine studio, 1973.

INTRODUCTION

An Iconographic College: The Art of David Driskell

The art of my friend David Driskell has always seemed to me a collage of intriguing characters. This impression first came to me in 1967 when I first saw the artist at work. I shall always remember how upon entering his studio at Fisk University I was struck by an arsenal of wood and linoleum cut-outs rolled up with inks and strewn everywhere. The whole room dazzling with color and the smell of printing ink presented a chaotic but exciting atmosphere. In the following days I was to see the artist carefully select images from that cluttered surrounding and magically organize them into his own distinctive art.

However, what has remained impressed upon me is not only the seemingly magical organization but the objectivity of Driskell at work. It is this objective approach to his oeuvre that I would like to call the Driskell temperament. His is a temperament of emotional restraint and a scholarly perception that enables him to select from a stock of images that span both his personal experiences and academic knowledge.

Driskell's art reflects his myriad involvements. It reflects his search for visual definitions. It reflects his scholarly interpretations of disparate Afro-American ideas. It reflects his vast knowledge of the history of African art.

Driskell is an inveterate shape organizer. His stock includes still lifes (of unique vases and plants), trees, landscapes, fish, animals and an assortment of human stylizations. Over the years he has transformed these images into countless variations of abstractions. His creative inventiveness is sure in the way he juxtaposes and embellished his images—always with that cool temperament. It is this cool temperament that allows him to objectify, analyze and cohere experience and it is this temperament that has allowed him the artistic posture of endless variation upon image.

Recently Driskell's art has been nurtured by yet another sphere of experience: his ever increasing knowledge of Africanized symbolisms. His travels in Africa, and the Western hemisphere, meshed with his knowledge of Afro-American art in the U. S. have led to further enrichment of his art. An idea that Driskell paints may as easily bring to mind a Harlem piano player as it might a Benin dignitary. His ideas span many places and many centuries.

Driskell is basically a two-dimensional artist. His ideas relate to the involvements of linear patterns and shifting planes. He is like a musician inventing orchestral variations in pattern and color. Yet his schema is quite geometric (although this geometric form is usually understated) and one is tempted to theorize that Driskell's art has traced a sense of geometric pattern from the rock art of the Nile valley across the Sahara and the Atlantic to the waters of the Mississippi. The geometric pattern is the uniting factor of many of his works and perhaps the next few years will find this factor itself becoming a major theme in all of his work.

Today David Driskell's art stands as an example of an erudite mind steeped in the cultures and styles of the Black man on several continents. His is not an anguished art, but a controlled gathering of data documenting the iconography of Africanized ideas throughout history.

KEITH MORRISON
Associate Professor of Art
University of Illinois, Chicago



The Dancer, 1972

Statement by the Artist

Like most artists who paint today, I am convinced that man has not lost the need to make images that are pleasing to his soul. There are times when I would like to set the whole world right by making images that speak out my convictions. But I know not the answers through the image alone. I am therefore contented to move about with subjects that provide a fresher outlook on visual form as I experience it. Most importantly, I have always felt the need to paint those things that are personally close to me. In recent years, I have turned my attention to images that reflect the exciting expression that is based in the iconography of African art. In so doing, I am not attempting to create African art, instead, I am interested in keeping alive some of the potent symbols that have significant meaning for me as a person of African descent.

My interest in African art was kindled by the scholarship of the late James A. Porter twenty or more years ago when I was an undergraduate at Howard University and since that time I have been a student of African culture desperately searching for those heritable sensibilities that help to establish our roots in more than one culture.

Many of the paintings in this exhibition reflect my interest in specific themes that have come about through recent travel to that vast continent. Other works included are general subjects ranging from still life to landscape studies. In all of these works I am still excited about the power of color and what it can do to transform a lifeless two dimensional surface into an actively forceful form. Thus, each exercise that I engage in with form is a new and refreshing experience that delights and pleases the artist soul in me that I am happy to possess.



Still Life with Compote, 1973

CATALOGUE

All dimensions are in inches. All works are the property of the artist.

PAINTINGS

Collage and Oil

GHETTO WALL #2, 1971
60 x 50

RATIO 4 TO 1, 1971
65 x 50

SUNSET, 1971
7½ diameter

PINE TREE, 1972
50 x 36

WOMAN WITH FLOWERS, 1972
36 x 36

GHETTO GIRL, 1973
40 x 30

KALAHARI DESERT, 1973
30 x 24

Acrylic

EZEKIEL SAW THE WHEEL, 1972
50 x 36

SWING LOW SWEET CHARIOT, 1972
50 x 36

Gouache and Egg Tempera

BOY WITH MELON, 1971
22 x 21½

SUN AND PINE, 1971
9 x 6¾

THE MOON DOES SEE, 1971
13 x 10¾

NOCTURNE, IFE, 1972
23¼ x 18

RETURN OF A DREAM, 1972
30 x 22

SHANGO RETURNS, 1972
24 x 18

"AFRICAN GIRL, DREAM," 1973
26 x 19

CROSSING THE EQUATOR, 1973
30 x 22

ETHIOPIAN BRIDE, 1973
24 x 18

LAND, SEA AND SKY, 1973
35 x 23

STILL LIFE WITH COMPOTE, 1973
31½ x 24



Ethiopian Bride, 1973

PRINTS

Woodcut

BENIN WOMAN, 1971

15½ x 11½

MOUNTAIN AND TILE, #2, 1971

15½ x 11

ROUND STILL LIFE, #2, 1971

19¼ x 16½

STILL LIFE WITH LEMON, 1971

10 x 12

WHITE TREE, 1971

6 x 5

BAKOTA GIRL, 1972

18½ x 12¼

BENIN WOMAN, III, 1972

15½ x 11½

THE DANCER I, 1973

17¾ x 12

THE DANCER, 1972

17¾ x 12

BAKOTA GIRL I, 1973

18½ x 12¼

BAKOTA GIRL II, 1973

18½ x 12¼

JONAH IN THE WHALE, 1973

16 x 12

LANDSCAPE, 1973

3½ diameter

THE FISH, 1973

12 x 9

TWO FACES, 1973

21½ x 14½

TWO LEMONS, 1971

13 diameter

YORUBA SCENE, 1973

21 x 16



Land, Sea and Sky, 1973

Publications:

(General Art Series)

Klee, Kandinsky and Other Modern Masters from the Guggenheim Museum,
Talladega College, Talladega, Alabama, 1958 Catalogue

Eight Young Printmakers, Art Gallery, Fisk University 1966 catalogue

Co-author: *Black Dimensions in Contemporary American Art*, 1971 (New
American Library)

The African and Afro-American Series: (Monograms and catalogues)

<i>John Rhoden and Walter Williams</i>	Art Gallery Fisk University, 1967 catalogue
<i>Sam Middleton and Richard Hunt</i>	Art Gallery Fisk University, 1968 catalogue
<i>Elton Fox "Drawings from Africa"</i>	Art Gallery Fisk University, 1968 catalogue
<i>Jacob Lawrence, "The Toussaint L'Ouverture Series"</i>	Art Gallery Fisk University, 1968 catalogue
<i>Contemporary Trends in African Art</i>	Art Gallery Fisk University, 1968 catalogue
<i>College Art Journal</i>	Spring 1968—Ashanti Goldweights by Margaret Plass Review
<i>"3 Afro-Americans"</i>	1969, Art Gallery Fisk University,
<i>William Artis and Ellis Wilson</i>	Art Gallery Fisk University, 1971 catalogue
<i>Palmer Hayden</i>	Art Gallery Fisk University, 1970 catalogue
<i>Claude Clark</i>	Art Gallery Fisk University, 1972 catalogue
<i>Alma Thomas</i>	Art Gallery Fisk University, 1971 catalogue
<i>Aaron Douglas</i>	Art Gallery Fisk University, 1971 catalogue
<i>The Fisk University African Collection</i>	Art Gallery Fisk University, 1970 catalogue

Personal:

Former Associate Professor and Head, Department of Art, Talladega College, Talladega, Alabama, 1955-1962

Former Associate Professor and Acting Head, Department of Art, Howard University, Washington, D.C., 1962-1966

Professor and Chairman, Department of Art, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, 1966-

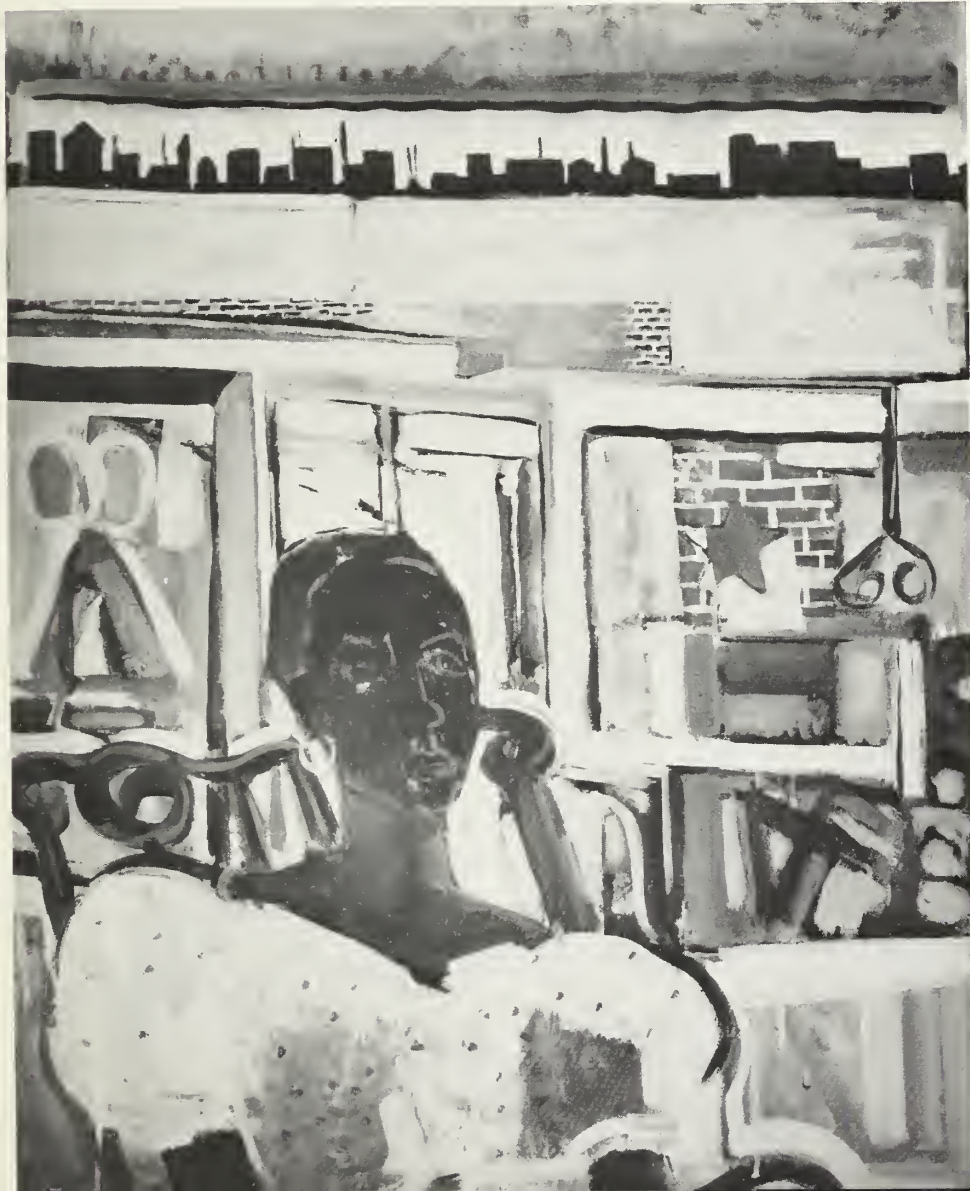
Visiting Professor, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, January 1970

Visiting Professor of Art, Bowdoin College, 1973

Visiting Professor of Art, Bates College, 1973

Guest Curator, Smithsonian Institution, National Collection of Fine Arts, 1972

Ghetto Girl, 1973





Benin Woman, III, 1972